

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

point. I think we all recognize Canada has established an outstanding record in hockey. Indeed, hockey players are one of our main exports to the United States.

This national hockey team system has been assisted by means of grants that have been made available under the physical fitness plan. While this was an improvement over the old system, it was recognized by the C.A.H.A. that it still was not satisfactory. They have been pressing for the establishment of a more effective permanent system of providing an outstanding Canadian team for international competition. They have recommended, for example, that a Canada hockey corporation be set up, which would involve distinguished citizens interested in the promotion of Canadian national hockey competition, and which would provide possibilities for assistance by private citizens of Canada's amateur hockey team. Unfortunately there has been no progress in this direction, largely because it requires certain legislative action on the part of the government.

However, this year we do have two national hockey teams preparing for international hockey, one in the east and one in the west. At the moment, one of the teams is engaged in important international competition. Unfortunately, because of the delay in sending the usual grant from the physical fitness fund, the C.A.H.A. finds itself financing on the basis of bank loans. I am sure that all the members in the house, all the people of Canada, feel that this is placing an unnecessary additional impediment in the way of Canada's participation in international hockey competition. I trust that the minister, in his reply tonight, will be able to inform the house and Canadians generally that these grants will be forthcoming. I do not know what the reason for the delay is. I am sure funds are available. I am sure we all agree that we have to improve even further the method of bringing together teams of Canadian amateurs.

I would hope the government would be able to assist the C.A.H.A. through legislative action in achieving the goal they have been striving toward for two or three years, the establishment of a Canada hockey corporation. Until that happy eventuality, I think it is most important that we do everything we can to boost the morale of our young Canadians who are competing by at least making certain that the usual grant is forthcoming at the earliest possible moment, and supporting them financially to this extent.

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I quite agree with the hon. member's remarks concerning the morale of Canada's national team. This gives me the opportunity to indicate that whatever action the government is taking it should certainly not be given the interpretation that we are not in any way in wholehearted support of Canada's national team. We would be very silly indeed if we did not recognize the tremendous effort that these boys are making, in many cases at enormous sacrifice, to bring some renown to Canada; they have our wholehearted support, and certainly mine.

If our support does not follow the pattern that the hon. member thinks appropriate, then that is his judgment. As far as I am concerned the action the government is now taking will in the long run be in the interests of our national team, both this year and next year.

There really has not been any delay for which we have to apologize. The fact of the matter is that the C.A.H.A. wrote to me requesting money some weeks ago. Their letter arrived a few days prior to a meeting that the C.A.H.A. was having in Winnipeg. At that time I had just received the second report of one of the committees of the National Advisory Council on Fitness and Amateur Sport which was studying the whole question of hockey. This was a report from the chairman and members of that committee, which in certain aspects was very critical of the C.A.H.A. and its relationship with the professionals.

One of the members of the official opposition who had studied this report asked me whether I did not have some sympathy with its contents. As a matter of fact, there were some matters worthy of note in this report. Therefore I thought it was only reasonable to advise the C.A.H.A. that, having received this second report only a few days prior to receiving their letter, I should have adequate opportunity to study it.

The following week end, which was past the deadline that they had set in their letter for a decision, my own fitness and amateur sport council was meeting to discuss the matter. I felt that since this body had been set up by statute to advise the minister in these matters, it seemed eminently logical to me that I should at least first meet the council and discuss this request before giving my answer to the C.A.H.A.